(b) whether Government are considering or propose to remove tax on salt by amending the salt policy;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government would also consider taking any steps for betterment of farmers and labourers engaged in production of salt; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and by when these steps will be taken?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (e) VAT is a tax intended to replace the State Sales Tax. Hence, the Central Government has no role to play either in imposing VAT on any particular item or exempting any item from VAT. An Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers was set up to decide on all issues relating to implementation of State level VAT.

The Empowered Committee of State Finance Minister has decided that while unprocessed and unbranded salt shall be exempt from VAT, processed and branded salt shall attract 4% rate of VAT. Thus, 4% rate of VAT shall be applicabe only on sale of processed and branded salt, which is generally manufactured in the organized sector. Hence, there would be no adverse impact on farmers and labourers engaged in production of salt.

Measures taken by the CGWB to create awareness on water conservation

*449. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has a scheme to create awareness amongst rural people about the need to conserve ground water resources;

(b) what was the method used by the Central Ground Water Board to create such awareness;

(c) whether it is a fact that the CGWB collaborated with universities to hold camps and seminars on this subject;

(d) the details of work done by the Board in this regard;

(e) whether it is also a fact that this work has been stopped; and

(f) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) to (f) Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) organizes mass awareness campaigns on various aspects of ground water including its augmentation and conservation in rural as well as urban areas facing problems of ground water depletion and quality deterioration.

The methods used by CGWB to create awareness are as follows:—

(a) Delivering lectures by eminent personalities in water sector.

(b) Displaying exhibits/fixing display stalls in important functions in various parts of the country.

(c) Distributing technical literature in local language.

(d) Production of films and their display.

(e) Involving school children in Water March and organising various competitions like essay/slogan writing, poster making, debates, etc.

(f) Observing Rain Water Harvesting Week throughout the country.

No collaboration has been made by the CGWB with Universities to hold camps and seminars on the subject. However, experts from CGWB actively participate in seminars/workshop organized by different Universities.

Restoration of water bodies

*450. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY:

SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to revive and restore 15 million water bodies in the country with a view to conserve and store water;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is its source of funding; and

(d) the details of the bodies that would be revived in the State of Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI): (a) and (b) There is no proposal to revive and restore at this moment 15 million water bodies in the country.